

TO: Distinguished Members of the Planning and Development Committee

FROM: Chantal DeArmitt, M.P.H.
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DATE: February 13, 2015

RE: Testimony on Proposed House Bills 5618 and 6483

I am exceedingly concerned and dismayed about discrimination against people with psychiatric disabilities, a protected class under federal and state law to protect their health information. There are also additional legal protections under the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If these bills are enacted there would be precedent for extending such discriminatory actions to other protected classes individuals.

How is residing in a group home any different from living in an independent apartment or house in terms of legal rights as a member of the community. The community has no right to, nor any access to, a person's health status or any other information that would single one out from neighbors when moving into a community, particularly as such information is to be used in a negative, illegal, discriminatory way.

Certain town concerns can be addressed in a responsible and respectful way through constructive and inclusive dialogue with all parties involved. That should be the goal of a task force. Any task force should be for state-wide study and recommendations only, not just for an individual municipality. To enact both of these bills would certainly entail duplication of effort and cost.